



Natomas Oral Histories

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Oral interview of

Teri Burns

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This is not a verbatim transcript. Parts of the interview have been paraphrased.

Teri Burns is a member and past president of the Natomas Unified School District Board of Trustees.

Anne: We are talking with Teri Burns. Teri is talking with us about the schools of Natomas Unified School District.

Natomas School, Natomas Junior High School

Teri: Ok, this is Teri Burns and we are at Natomas School, the original Natomas Union School, which was one big block of cinderblock classrooms. It started here in the late '50s. The school was the whole school from K-8 for almost 30 years. It was put here as the central point in the district, in the farm district that encompassed the old American Basin School District and the Jefferson School District. When those two merged in 1956, this was the central spot.

In the early 1980s, growth started in South Natomas and they determined that they needed another school. They started to plan for the junior high out in South Natomas, and they started building that facility in 1983. By the time it was built and ready to be opened, the community decided that they would move the suburban elementary kids out there, closer to home, and keep the junior high students way out here in the field. So, this site became Natomas Junior High, which it was for many years. It was expanded as Natomas Junior High — the district office was also out on this site in portable buildings as they started to expand, and was in trailers. They added some more trailers out here and portable buildings, and eventually expanded this campus to include a permanent gymnasium/cafeteria and some additional permanent classroom buildings, and it served as the district's only junior high for many years. Eventually, the decision was to expand it even further, so there was a second expansion that was major enlargements to this school — added its own full gymnasium, a library, and lots and lots more classrooms. This junior high was split between this school and the Leroy F. Greene Middle School that was built much later to accommodate the size, but we still needed the additional room. Right now, the junior high students, now called middle school students, are all out at the H. Allen Hight facility. This school is currently used by two of our charter schools: one is the Westlake Charter School, which started as a K-5 and became a K-6, and then the Natomas Pacific Pathways 3 Charter School, which is a middle-high, grades 6-12, which is given education program support by the McGeorge School of Law. So those two schools utilize this facility now.

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This facility was the embryo starting place for many of our charter schools and many of our unique programs. The west part of the campus, the cinderblock buildings and some of the trailers, was where we started Natomas Charter School, the Discovery High School, which is our continuation school, and we had another couple of programs which started here and moved on to bigger and better things as we went. Westlake Charter, of course, started there as well. It is the embryo school. If we're starting something, we start it up here on the corner and see how it works. This site used to be surrounded by farm fields. It was great in the capacity for junior high school students to walk, so if you were ditching school there was no place to go. There were no buses, no sidewalks, it was all rice fields. You couldn't go out to get a soda or hang out anywhere. There was no place to go within walking distance, so kids stayed on campus. When the principal that was here moved to the Leroy Greene site, her first comment was, "I had no idea how many people just randomly stopped by schools," because she was out here, and

if someone had stopped at the campus they either had business here or better keep going. She knew, “Why are you here,” or “Who are you here to bother.” It was very, very clear at the time. When we were building the second expansion here, the contractor went broke, we got into a big hassle, and it took a long time to finish that project because there was a lot of controversy between the various subcontractors and how they would get their money, the bonding agent and so forth. The second part was slowed up substantially because the contractor went belly up.

Now it is a full campus, it’s got great fields behind it, we’ve got housing around here, students can walk across the street to school — that is something that never would have happened a long time ago. The city now has built a divider in the middle of the road so cars can’t turn everywhere, because now we’ve got kids who will run across the road to get here. It makes life much less inconvenient.

The original district superintendent and principal was Myron Cross when the school started as just a small school. But when I came to the district, the superintendent was Raff McDonald. Jay Berry was the principal of Natomas Junior High when the district split the elementary from the junior high in 1984. It has gone through many principals and vice principals since then, but when I started, Jay Berry was the principal.

As I say, the building’s first remodel design came about as we built it out around a big courtyard. There is a beautiful open area with seating that’s covered, designed for student assemblies and so forth. It’s great for picnics, and those kinds of things. It also allows for equipment to be easily brought into the auditorium. I should note that LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification and green design, and so forth, really started to become much more of a priority, so when we built the second addition, all of this new piece to the east, much more of that is designed to include recycled materials, LEED-certification items, much more so than the original parts. We have remodeled the original school buildings, the cinderblock buildings, to try and bring them up, but they are nowhere near as close as these other buildings.

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Just up the road, west of the school district, is where the original community pool was. The pool was donated by the Novak family to the school district so that we could do the insurance and all those things. There was an annual gathering to start the season that the fire department came and pumped out the pool. They pumped out the leaves and stuff, the debris that had gotten in over the winter. So, they pumped it out, filled the pool up, and it was all ready to start the summer. The fire department was part and parcel of this. The pool ran for many, many years on volunteer labor. Betty Novak was the “pool mother” and she went out and opened the pool, serving as the lifeguard and monitor. The pool was built because one of the farmer families had lost a child who died swimming in the drainage canal. The farmers got together and decided we need a real pool for kids and so that’s why they put the pool in. The school took it over for insurance reasons and maintenance reasons and all of those things, had it for many, many years. It had gone into disrepair and disuse in the late ’80s following the opening of the Doyle Pool in south Natomas — many more people used that. So, we wound up selling off that property and it now is in private hands.

[00:10:20]

American Lakes School

We’re now at American Lakes School. As I said before, it was originally designed to be the junior high of the district. It is in the southeast corner of the district; in fact, it is right on the boundary line for the school district. The park that is adjacent to it is not in this school district. In most of the houses behind it, those kids can’t go to this school and it was a big controversy with kids saying, “Why can’t we go to that

school?” “Because you’re not in the district.” The district lines were made on old farm lines not on major roads that came later.

The school was built with the intention that it would be the junior high. This was the first area of any real population build-out. This is where the suburbs had moved to Natomas. There was a significant little cluster that is now the old homes in Natomas. The more they talked as they were building this school, it made more sense to keep the little kids closer to home if there were any issues. Send the older kids with more independence and more hormonal nature out to the farmlands where they are away from people. So, when this school opened in 1984, it was opened as a K-6. This school was designed in the hot trend of the time: to have movable walls. So, teachers could collaborate and open the walls between classrooms. That was the design throughout it with several little pods to do that with. Almost immediately, the teachers put stuff up on all those walls, and those walls were almost never used in that capacity. They did find that it made classes much noisier. So, they wound up putting in things to be sound barriers, as well as not moving the walls. The old school used to have a bunch of glass sliding doors that opened on to the central multipurpose room section, again for that same purpose. This school was the only elementary school for many years. It was built for about 900 students. While we were in the process of gathering the money and land for a second elementary school, this school got up to about 1,700 kids. It was huge! It was a huge, huge campus with a bunch of portables on the playground. It was way too big for an elementary school. It was the elementary school — everybody went here.

Just a few years ago, we wound up renovating this site completely. At this school, the roof always leaked, and it was the running joke. Whoever became the principal at the time, after the first rain, I would come in and ask, “Which classroom roofs were leaking?” The principal would say to himself, how did she know? We knew the roofs always leaked at this school. Many attempts to repair them were unsuccessful before the remodel. A couple of years ago, we decided, we had a little extra space, we had some bond money, we were going to remodel this school. They got into this school and we wound up remodeling it, not only to the ground but below the ground. It turned out that one of the sewer systems was never connected! So, as part of that, we wound up opening the time capsule, in which there was a letter from the original contractor, who has since then gone belly-up, saying that “this was the most modern, most well designed, most well-built school and will last for generations.” We all had a laugh over that. We did some major remodeling, took out the movable wall concepts in it, added a new library, and added some additional new rooms to it. So, it is a bigger campus.

When we remodeled this campus, we did significant greening, so it has a lot of recycled, reused materials in it and so forth.

We also started our first after-school care over at the northwest corner of the campus, so we had after-school care that operates on-site so students could go right over there. There was not for a long, long time any fence along the back to allow students to go and use the park. They also went over and used the pool as well. The City of Sacramento community pool, the Doyle Pool, was the pool that students went to for a very long time. There was a security push years later to put up a fence between the park and the school site. It was done both for student security and for campus security, to protect the facility.

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This was the first school site where the parents painted a map of the United States in the quad, so the kids could use that for play and so forth. That was a great parent effort. American Lakes was our first elementary school. Raff McDonald was the superintendent when it opened, and Chuck Kilbourne was

the opening principal and was here for many years. A number of the teachers at this school have gone on to become principals at other campuses. This was the growing ground to start that.

The park opening on to the campus — we did do an arrangement early with the city, before we had a major joint-use agreement with the city. We had an arrangement where we mowed and they did the upkeep of the sprinkling system and so forth. So, we had a joint-use agreement with the city on who took care of what and when. Because this was the only park in the area, and the only facility, a lot of the soccer clubs were here on the weekend and overlapped into that facility. We tried to keep the restrooms open. This facility was in tremendous use on the weekends for churches. There were no churches or other large facilities out in Natomas at that point either, so churches had services out here. This was the community center for the Natomas community. There were no other facilities to be even rented out. It wasn't just the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, but it was churches, it was the arts folks who wanted to do anything. Any kind of community event happened at this facility because this was the place that had any kind of rooms for rent and so forth.

It just should be noted that when we did the redo of this school and had the big ceremony to reopen it, we had a number of the early board members and the early principals from the original school who were here for the second grand opening.

[00:18:44]

Jefferson School

I have an especial affinity for Jefferson Elementary School because it was the first school that was completely built under my term on the school board. Jefferson School moved us to the west side of Pebblewood Drive where we're starting to get a little more development things going on — it was starting to grow. It was going to be the school that would give relief to American Lakes. We needed to move students here while Jefferson was being built. On the north side of the campus, we set up a campus of all mobile-building schools. So, it became a school over there, while they were doing construction on the site, the east side of the site. Both were going on simultaneously, and one of my big requests at the time was to make sure there were women contractors, so that girls could see that this was an ok job for them, too. We did that. We set up the school in the portables. This had all been flat — there was nothing out here. They were just starting to build homes as well.

I still remember one of my favorite stories about the opening. Judy Harder was the first principal here. On the first day of school, a woman came into the school office. She was crying and saying, "I will not have my child go to a school which is nothing but dirt and cabins." So, this is always the "dirt and cabins" school. I wanted to ask where she had seen that ivy-covered brick school that she was imagining, because I had driven all around Natomas and hadn't seen that school.

Everything in Natomas was dirt or construction in process. Because there was nothing out here in the way of trees, other than level dirt. The weekend before we were set to open, my husband and I bought a tree and planted it outside the trailer that was the principal's office so she would have a tree outside her school. So, it is still there, over there.

Kids got to play over in their part of the school. The construction site was fenced and the school was built, and they, in a year, were able to move over to the big school. We kept some of the portables here, but most were moved over to the Bannon Creek site so they could start construction over there. Again, we were growing so fast. This was the second growth spurt in Natomas at that time.

When we started this school site, that was when the big movement for gardens in schools was really starting. There is a big garden in the courtyard here. A garden went in over at American Lakes — it wasn't as comprehensive as this garden here, which is staying here. That was a part of this.

This site is built around a big center grassed courtyard for assemblies and where kids can do things in the middle, and the lines of sight are all pretty good. This is the first campus of this design. We took this design and used it over at Bannon Creek, with a couple of tweaks and things that we learned off this one. But essentially they're the same school. That was a big part of it.

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Judy Harder was the first principal over here. Raff McDonald was probably still the superintendent when we opened this. General Davie, I think, was the superintendent when we opened Bannon Creek. A close turn there.

This school site is adjacent to Bannon Creek, which runs through here, also adjacent to a park. There was a big effort to build parks. Again, we did joint maintenance with the park district. There were lots and lots of soccer games in this field, as well. On Saturday mornings, all the neighbors had issues with parking along there. Parking became a big issue with drop-offs, and on Saturday mornings. The school opened bathrooms to accommodate soccer players.

They also decided to build the Fort Natomas play structure park over here, which was a big community park effort. It's adjacent to the school. It was open to the kids from the school to go over during the day, but through a fence. It was a little more protected. The gates were open to go to it, but it wasn't just completely run onto the campus. That was a huge community effort that stayed there for many years. It was eventually moved by the South Natomas library, a more public venue, but there are still park and playground activities over here.

The folks here at Jefferson have a big tradition of a big Halloween parade. They were also the ones, at this school site, where they started the big Walk to School program, the walking school bus, traffic tamers, and all of those kinds of things, to get kids walking to school instead of having traffic all up and down this road. Along the creek is the bike trail, that's another piece. They were encouraging kids to walk to school and to bike to school. It makes it handy for kids who are coming. When we were designing the school boundaries, the kids on this side of Truxel tended to come to this school and kids on the other side of Truxel went to American Lakes. The busy street was a natural divide.

An important note about this school is that it is Jefferson Elementary School. Not Thomas Jefferson, or somebody Jefferson — it is Jefferson Elementary School. It was named after one of the two original school districts that made up Natomas Union School District. We went through a great deal of debate about whether we would name it American Basin School or Jefferson School. Until it came about one of the school board members' sons said, "American Basin, that's like the toilets." There was a big push to not name it after the toilet company so it would become the toilet school. That's why it's Jefferson School instead of American Basin School.

[00:26:07]

Bannon Creek School

Ok, so now we're at Bannon Creek School. You rightly note it is not more than a good baseball hit away from Jefferson School. This is where all the population was at the time, so we bought the land here. It is on the west side of Truxel as well, and it is south of Jefferson. It is the Jefferson School building plan

simply put over here with improvements, with stuff that we saw in the first plan that would be better. So, this is the upgraded version — plugs in different places, doorways in different places. You know, once you get into a place, you say, “Oh wouldn’t this be better if this was over here.” That’s what we’ve done in this site.

This site, again, we had at the far south end of the campus a child care facility, and we eventually put in facilities for the County Office of Education to use for special education programs that served all of this north area, unique programs, serving small numbers of kids with special disabilities, so we had kids coming from Grant, Del Paso, and all parts of the county. So, that was the scoop about how that opened. This also goes along Bannon Creek Parkway. Students could get over to the big barn over there if they wanted to, but they’ve kept them on this side of the creek.

We always had a problem at new schools with at least one site neighbor. We always had community soccer games over here in the morning and we had one neighbor over here against the fence on the southside who always complained about the kids and the noise, so we worked very hard to move those activities away from the south side as much as possible.

At this school site, the initial principal was Randy Beaver. How that became important was that the mascot the students chose for this site is the Bannon Creek Beavers. The name remains the Bannon Creek Beavers and that’s where that name comes from. We also have at this site, the Garden of Hope, which was constructed in memory of Anne Ofsink’s son, who passed away while a student. The student community rallied round that, did a bunch of origami cranes, and really dedicated that park. It is a nice area for restful reflection on campus.

In terms of joint use, there is not anywhere much here because the growth along the creek really separated us more from the park. The students could go over to the park, but this campus is really more separated from the park than the other two. There is a small park on this side of the creek at the northwest end of the campus that we share mixed use maintenance of, but it really is a very small facility.

One of the landmarks near this is the old Paul Shimada house, the old farmhouse. It is really right across the street, northwest of the corner of the campus. Now former Mayor Heather Fargo lives there. Paul Shimada and his wife, Amy, both came over to the campus and volunteered quite a bit. Paul was a great volunteer in the community and volunteered at all three of our elementary schools, reading and so forth. Active in the Lions Club, he brought them along to do all sorts of activities including plowing a vacant field to set up a fireworks booth to sell fireworks to make money for our schools. Paul was a former member of the Natomas Union School Board whose term ended when mine began in 1984. He was a great activist. We wound up as a result of all those activities naming the football field and stadium out at Natomas High School after Paul, for all his efforts.

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As we expanded programs, the Gifted and Talented Program moved over to this site. The GATE students from all three sites came over here. We tried to balance specialized programs throughout the district, but this is where the GATE classes were. We also have talked about building this school site into a K-8 school. We have one in the north area, and this is where we would put the one in the south area. It will require some new construction to do that. For example, we would have to have a separate gymnasium. To do that, we have to wait for the current flood moratorium to end. We’re doing prep work now to make that possible.

Likewise, all three of these sites were then the only community facilities in Natomas. Every weekend, all of them had one or two churches operating in the gymnasiums. All of them have a variety of community events. By the time this opened, we are really working with the city to have the gymnasiums open at night for activities for kids and for adults. There were always basketball games going on, almost every night in the gymnasiums. These were really like almost 20-hour-a-day facilities for most of the time in the early years of these facilities. The first Catholic Church extension for Natomas was operating here in the gymnasium at Bannon Creek.

[00:32:30]

Leroy F. Greene Middle School

So, here we are at the Leroy F. Greene Middle School. This is the second middle school built in the district. When we moved over here, we changed the discussion from “junior high” to “middle school.” That became the new way of talking about how you served seventh and eighth grade-ish students. When we were looking for a new middle school site, growth was coming fast and furious in Natomas. We were originally looking at the site on Truxel, which is now where the community center and the library is. That site had been owned by the Grant Union High School District. There was also a lot of push at that time to unify Natomas and pull out of Grant. So, Grant was very, very unwilling to sell us that site because they kept saying that that site was going to be the high school site and we shouldn’t unify. Even though that site was never large enough for a high school, they continued to hold that threat. We needed to move, we needed to act, and property was available up here to build a middle school. We finally went ahead, bought property to build a school, and figured we’d deal with the other when time allowed.

There was a lot of controversy about this site because it was over the freeway. How would kids get here over the freeway? When we did build, we made sure as part of this project that a walking bridge was built over the creek, between the freeway and this site. We tried to make it as successful as possible in that regard. We knew we would be transporting all the kids from the eastside of the freeway by bus over to this site. Once this opened, we moved a large number of kids out from the old Natomas Junior High site over to this site.

But first, the other thing that we did was, we proceeded to unify just the Natomas District. So, we would wind up having our own K-12 system, have our own high schools. Older students went by contract with the San Juan district, to Mira Loma High School.

When we started housing our own freshman class that would go into our high school, we started housing them here at Leroy Greene Middle School with Gordon Jackson as the first high school principal. Only after they moved to Natomas High would the middle school move here.

This school was built as a pretty good-sized, spread-out campus. Again, it is a unique design, the first for this design. The state law required that for all these campuses, that you could only build so much of your campus with permanent buildings and the rest portable classroom buildings. They did that so that as populations shifted you could up- and down-size schools without having unneeded facilities. That law has recently changed, but because so many of our facilities were built in that period, that’s why we have a number of permanent-looking portable facilities on our campuses. We made it a point to try and make them look as permanent a portable as we could.

This site is also built adjacent to Orchard Park, which wasn’t developed by the city for a very long time. This was the big park facilities up in this area for a long time. The only real housing was Swallow’s Nest

townhouses and small homes. It was a no-kids place basically, so there wasn't a lot there, but this area started to develop fairly quickly and was quickly utilized as park property by the students around here.

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Deborah Keyes was the principal at Natomas Junior High who came over and opened this site. As I mentioned, her first reaction was, "Wow, there are a lot of people who stop by schools. They are just walking by, walking dogs, looking for things, looking for directions." It was very different from being out in the fields, out in the farm where she had been. The superintendent would have been at this time Dr. General Davie.

The school is named after Leroy F. Greene, who had been the area's state assemblyman for many, many years and became the state senator from this area. He had served as chair for the education committee and had done quite a bit for this part of the community. His most important asset at this time was that he sat on the state allocation board and made sure that money was available for new school construction. Since we needed money to build our schools, it was helpful to have an advocate on the state allocation board. Since Leroy F. Greene was on this board, he made sure that Natomas was raised in the priority and that funds were made available to us in a timely fashion to build this site.

At this site, we had the Masons come out and do the Masonic dedication of a school. The Masons have a big program where they do that and give a donation to the school. It is quite a social production, so Leroy Greene was here for that. They set the cornerstone for this building, this campus. It was quite the facility and quite the event to dedicate its opening.

It closed for the 2010-2011 and the 2011-2012 school years. We are doing some complete remodeling of the facility, fixing a number of things that needed to be fixed. We had some additional space. We knew we had to do a number of modifications to this building, so we moved all of the middle school students out to H. Allen Hight, where the middle school is now, for these two years.

Previously, when we were looking for more elementary space, we moved the sixth graders to this campus as well from the elementary schools, so this was a six, seven, eight campus for a number of years. When we moved them away to the H. Allen Hight campus, we just moved the seventh and eighth graders. We went back to keeping sixth graders at their elementary school sites.

There was a piece of property behind the gymnasium and over the drainage canal. There was a huge, huge concern about building this property. This is where we got into environmental questions about the giant garter snake, and how would we accommodate the giant garter snake. So, all the school facilities and properties are built well away from the creek, so the giant garter snake is accommodated. One of the ways we did that was, when we bought the property, the property seller had done some similar accommodations on other properties, so we used his work on the Environmental Impact Report to say we can accommodate the giant garter snake. The property over there was designed to be wetlands during the period of construction so the giant garter snake could make its habitat over there while all the construction was going on here, and keep that up.

The district considered keeping the parcel for a separate facility. We were not sure if we were going to keep it for a district office, a charter school site, or something else, but it has now been sold to another owner.

[00:41:25]

Habitat for the giant garter snake was a huge consideration here. The site was designed to protect habitat needed for the snake. The Natomas Night Hawk was chosen as the high school mascot while they were here recognizing that bird. The Swainson's hawk is also another local species that is endangered. The mascot for the Leroy Greene Middle School is the Hawks for the same reason. We went to a great deal of effort to accommodate all the endangered species out here and keep them safe in the property behind it.

This site was used particularly during the time when the high school was growing here. First, grade nine, grade ten, and then grade eleven. They stayed here until the middle of their 12th grade year. We'd hoped to have them out by the whole first year of their 12th grade year, but the construction got slowed over there. Our question to the seniors was, "Do you want to move over to your new school, even though there is construction going on, or would you rather graduate from here?" They all said, "We want to graduate from the new school," so the first complete four-year high school class did not graduate out of this school. The other high school students were going to Mira Loma High School at this time. We had a joint use program with them. But that freshman class, the ninth graders, started here at Leroy Green.

After Leroy Greene was built, there was the first levee moratorium where, because of the condition of the levees, the Corps of Engineers would not let anymore development happen in Natomas. So, they stopped all development in Natomas. Things settled out. We had time to get caught up with our growth, fill out the schools we had, and it was a chance to kind of get settled a little bit. Then once the levee moratorium was lifted, they were gangbusters again on growth.

We were growing 13 percent a year. We were building a minimum of a school a year, sometimes two to keep up. Again, our schools would get very crowded, and then uncrowded.

I should mention that American Lakes, during the first growth spurt, became the first year-round school in the district. We had four tracks going. There was a lot of controversy. Would people want to go to year-round school? How could they possibly go to year-round school? It never happened when they were in school. As a result, we promised that Bannon Creek and Jefferson would stay traditional calendars. People had the choice to go either to a traditional school or year-round. It turned out that more people opted to want to go into the year-round schedules than wanted to go into the traditional calendars, so it all worked out very well. American Lakes scaled back to a single track year-round as student populations stabilized. All of our schools are rapidly becoming, by next year, will all be single track, but a modified year-round calendar, so they have a shorter summer and longer breaks during the year.

[00:45:18]

Two Rivers Elementary School

We're skipping one out of order for the convenience of coming over here to Two Rivers Elementary. It is just across the traffic circle from Leroy Greene Middle School and behind Swallow's Nest.

So here we are at Two Rivers. This is where you really start to see significant joint use with the City of Sacramento. We have a joint use agreement with the city for all of our facilities: use of the indoor facilities, use of the outdoor facilities, use of the parks. There is a park adjacent to this school site as well, so it happens. This is in a very residential area, set back in trees.

John Paris-Salb was the first principal at this site. The next school we built was the Natomas Park Elementary — this site is a redo of that school's plan. Again, it is the second upgraded version. We found things we liked better as we used that school. This school has a big play area, a big surface area. Because it is so close to the American River, this is the first school where we did emergency plan development as to how we would evacuate the students if there were any kind of levee problems going on. So, all the buses can line up on this field and get students to the other side of the school district in 20 minutes. It is a well-honed machine.

The great gymnasium here in this school allows for food service. We had significantly improved our food services in these later campuses.

By this time, Dave Tooker was the superintendent, when we were operating this. This school, too, is under the wing of the Creekside Community Association. The Creekside Community Association has an annual clean up and paint day where they come over, and folks with and without children do major efforts to keep the school nice and keep it going.

This site was also the initial site for Westlake Charter School. When they opened, they had portables on the back side of this campus, and this is where they opened up.

Now nice homes — this used to be all ag land around here. You'll find Barandas Park if you follow this road around, and it takes you up to the I-80 freeway. So, this is bordered quietly by freeways and rivers, and you'd never know it was back here.

[00:48:33]

Natomas High School, Discovery High School

All right, so after we decided to unify and started to build a school site, we decided to build a high school. Naturally the naming of that was easy: Natomas High School. We looked for another large available property. High schools take 40 acres, so finding something that was both affordable and accessible was a bit of a challenge. We found the Fong Ranch property over off of Truxel Road. The acreage opened up to Northgate Boulevard. Property that Grant High School District had for a high school was accessible off Northgate. We tried to get them to sell that to us and annex that, but, again, they were not interested in annexing any of our property, because they were still unhappy that we had separated out. We decided to buy the piece that was closest to Truxel, on the edge of our district.

We negotiated with the Fongs. The Fong family was a large farming family, a large Japanese [Chinese] farming family who had that property ready to sell. As a result of our good negotiations with them, the library at Natomas High School is named the Fong Library and Media Center. The road that goes in the eastside of Natomas High School is Fong Ranch Road. Many members of the Fong family attended the ground breaking and school dedication.

The Natomas High School is built closer to the eastside of that property rather than the westside along Truxel going toward the I-80 freeway. There was talk that light rail would eventually come down Truxel. There is an easement on the corner of the high school site where the current sign is for the high school that could be a light rail station. So that is why there is no construction built out at that corner of the campus, to allow for an eventual light rail station there. Board member Mike Wiley, who worked for Sacramento Regional Transit, kept us aware of light rail construction plans. The Natomas High School was the premier location in the district. We designed it to build the district swimming pool there. We built an Olympic-sized pool there with the intention of being able to hold swim meets and so forth. By

this time, we're doing great joint use with the City of Sacramento. The City of Sacramento was going to operate the pool and we would maintain the pool. We would have priority use of it during all the school times, but the city could operate it during the summer and all of those things. We held off on the pool construction until after the school was built, to limit the bond debt of area residents.

We also slowed down on building one of the two-story buildings on the campus at the south end of campus. We could reduce our construction costs and stay within the community bond, because we didn't need it right away. Because we had a different contractor who was building the final classroom building, we ran into some contractor problems. The interesting thing that holding off the last building and later fencing off the construction area did was set traditions. It created walk patterns that to this day students still use to get to the library, to get to other areas, because you used to go around that construction — "That is just how we always go to get places."

[00:52:45]

In later years, after Inderkum High School was built, we put in artificial turf in both of the stadiums, so that we could use them more frequently. They don't deteriorate when you have kids on them 24/7, allowing ease of maintenance, less cost to water, and all of those things, and we could rent out the facilities and make some money off them without disadvantaging our teams. Initially, it was opened with turf and dirt with a stadium with a track around it, a place to throw discus and all of the track games. That was to be the central point for the school district. That was the big deal — was the stadium and so forth. From the beginning, people said it looked more like a community college campus and symbol of community pride. We added the final building later. We added the pool later.

When we finally opened the pool, the ceremony was attended by folks on the board at the time the project was planned, the current board, other community folks, and a bunch of local kids. But the first person in the pool, when we officially christened the pool, was Teri Burns — the board member who quickly slipped out of her dress, had a swimsuit on underneath, and jumped in after the speeches. So, I was the first person in the pool! I listened as I heard one of the ladies saying to the kids in the pool later, "Just think, when you turn 50, you'll be able to say you were in the pool on the first day." I knew I would turn 50 long before those kids and I would remember that I was in the pool on the first day.

The high school theater was still under construction when we started the school, but we had the band room. They created dinner theater. So, they used the band room for several nights and had performances, including drama performances, poetry readings, music by the bands, instrumentals, and the choral groups. We would come in in the evening and they would have little candlelit tables around, and during the break, the home ec class would serve little cookies and candies, little desserts during the intermission, so the tradition of dessert theater still goes on at Natomas High School. Even though they now have a big theater and those things to go with it, once a year we enjoy dinner theater in the small room. But the home ec class no longer does the little desserts. The parent club brings the desserts. A big theater was built near the gym and multipurpose room.

The design of the campus is a big expansive campus, but it locks off. You can lock off access to the theater, the gymnasium area, so you can do events at night without having people on the main part of the campus where the classrooms are, and the library. So, it is very community-use friendly. They can do a lot of activities there without worrying about the public being in the rest of the campus.

Likewise, it has a number of portable classrooms, as I mentioned before. It has a great central library designed to be really a media center, with a lot of plugs, a lot of computer access, and a lot of stuff

online. It was at the cutting-edge of technology at the time. It has a broadcast studio built into the media center, so they can tape programs for the school that show on morning video programs around campus. So, it was designed to be a full-purpose production studio, so they do produce programs for community TV and so forth.

A number of students grumbled about the construction at first, but it was our athletes who came back from away games at other area high schools who changed the tone by noting how really great our campus was compared to everywhere else. They built Nighthawk pride.

Gordon Jackson was the first principal at the school. He was the principal over at Leroy Greene at the initial program and built up the program that would be started at Natomas High School.

I mentioned that as we started out, we didn't have a lot of facilities and equipment. Our band leader at the time started a percussion group that recognized the construction going on at the campus while they were there. They did a percussion group on buckets, paint pans, and ladders, and it was great to watch. They did a fantastic job. They had ladders that they banged on and made great music out of all of those things. So, they learned their percussion at the construction site.

So, that campus expanded. There was a terrific theater program there. We built out a full-stage theater. Volunteers — Holly Dallas was one of the great advocates of the theater program, got that program up and running very well at that campus. John Eick, the current principal, had been the drama teacher and produced some fabulous plays there. They had a great support from their parent organization, really utilized that campus. The campus is also used now quite often for the Odyssey of the Mind statewide competition and other community events.

[00:59:00]

Later on, we started the Discovery High School, the continuation high school out at the old Natomas site on Del Paso Road. As we expanded that program, we built a facility for it at the end of Fong Ranch Road. It is a separate campus, not connected to but next to the fields and campus of Natomas High School. It has a fabulous garden program, because, again we had Ken Vanderford, an instructor there who was very much into a garden program. So, they have great gardens and help students learn horticulture and gardening activities as potential careers. It is a much smaller program. It has much more individualized instruction for students who had to drop out of school due to pregnancy or gang affiliations or whatever, or students who just were not fitting into the regular program. It was designed to allow students an opportunity to succeed. It was called Discovery after the space shuttle Discovery blew up. It fit these kids who were looking for and discovering their talents. They wanted to have on their diplomas a very positive-sounding name and that's what it was. The program is individualized to meet student needs, and students progress out of it as quickly as they can. It has been recognized as a model school by the State Department of Education a couple times now. Sandy Rezinis was the initial principal of that high school and really championed that and making sure those kids got off to a great start. They selected teachers who really wanted to be in that kind of program. It was a volunteer approach. They got some teachers who really were very focused on helping kids who were struggling. One of the most exciting things about the program — I used to always see here when the state comes out to do the evaluation of the program, the kids saying, "No, I want to graduate from here. I don't want to go back and graduate from Natomas High. This fits. This is where I want to be." The most powerful message I ever heard — there's a quad on the campus where the graduations occur. I watched a woman cry while her son gave the valedictorian speech. I went up to her afterwards to congratulate her and she said, "You know, two years ago I never thought my son would be alive now, and tonight he's the valedictorian." That's the

powerful kind of stuff that happens in that school with the teachers that care so much and all the support staff that care so much. Tim Shironaka is only the second principal, and he shared Ms. Rezin's passion for these kids. Their mascot is the Bulldog, a symbol of tenacity.

Oh, the Natomas High School site is also the home of our program for special needs adults, a fabulous program where we help developmentally disabled adults meet their individual learning needs — helping them cook, take care of themselves, get job skills, take the bus, and other life skills. The program has been housed on that campus always and is very well-respected and has helped a lot of folks in our community. They always have a great Thanksgiving feast in which they invite the board members and other individuals from the community. It is always a terrific, heartwarming event.

Natomas High School has also been the home of the Air Force Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program up until this year. We had an ROTC, which was very active in the community, participating in the Natomas Heritage Festival and other events. Other interesting things about Natomas High, again, we mentioned the field after Paul Shimada. At that time, he was fairly ill. He had done so much for the community, we really wanted to recognize his activities. Also, Janine Hadrych, the school health aid at Natomas High School, started the first blood drives there. That has grown successfully over the years and we have now hundreds of students who give blood twice a year at Natomas High School, much to the pleasure of the Sacramento Blood Bank.

The homecoming game is held at the Natomas High stadium. The first homecoming we had, we had 100% attendance from all of the graduates. We had one student who graduated early — she had enough credits in her junior year to graduate — and she attended the first homecoming. So, we had 100% attendance from the alumni at the first homecoming, and we never will again.

[01:04:45]

Natomas Park Elementary School

I mentioned before, after the first flood moratorium was lifted, growth started dramatically. The city had also come up with a plan for development in North Natomas. They were starting to build homes.

The public had seen developers in Elk Grove put up signs to say that there was going to be a school next to new housing, and 10 years later there still was no school. Developers recognized that it was an important selling point to have a school in the community. One of the developers came to the school district and said, "What will it take to get a school in my development?" We said, "Well, actually that one is going to be quite a couple of years off. We've got a couple of other schools to build first." They said, "No, what will it take to get this one built first?" We said, "Well, you'd have to front the money, because we don't have the cash to do it." The state funds schools in a funny way: You have to have all the kids before you can start building the school, even though it takes a year and a half to build the school. They said, "No worries, we can do that. We'll front the money because we know we'll get it back from the state when it comes. We'll do that as a selling point to selling our homes. We'd only ask that the exterior colors match the color scheme of our development." We said, "Sure, we can do that." We were happy to accommodate.

With the developers of Natomas Park Development as colleagues and partners, we built the Natomas Park Elementary School. It was built to all of our specifications, so it in no way changed any of that. We worked with a designer to do it, but it is in colors that match the original design of the builder. The builder was able to say, "See, we're building these homes here and they are building the school across

the street. You'll have a school for your kids ready right there when you move in." When we opened the Natomas Park Elementary, we knew so much growth was going on in Natomas it would be full in no time.

Brent Johnson was the first principal here. He'd been an elementary school teacher at American Lakes. We opened the school with very small classes because we knew it was going to fill up by the end of the year. So, there were classes of 12 to 15 students. It was very interesting because we had so many teachers who had come from American Lakes and had been there at the time when there were 1,600 students there and everything was jam-packed, and had all this experience. Now they're at this brand-new campus, this nice campus, and they've got 14 kids in their class. They would say to me, "I've never had this problem. I don't have a birthday in every month. If a kid is absent, I don't have enough kids for two teams." They had to completely rethink their way of teaching. All the stuff that had worked for them for 20 years, they were not able to do with these really small classes. So, as much as they would tell you, "Gosh, I wish I had a really small class," it created some unexpected problems as well as some advantages. But, that didn't last long. By the end of the year, all the classes were full, and we were turning kids away who lived in the neighborhood from this site. We moved on.

For this school, the naming was fairly easy. When we got over to Two Rivers and the other schools, we said we really want some historical names, some community names. We engaged the Natomas Historical Society and some other folks from the community in helping come up with a list of names for schools that we should be considering. As a result, Two Rivers and some others were picked off of that list, but Natomas Park came from those that helped fund it.

Natomas Park — one of the teachers who moved here is a big advocate for community gardens, and has a long, very large, and very active garden in the back of its school where students grow their food, learn about growing food, cook the food. They sell it as fundraisers. It is a very active garden school.

Again, by the time we were starting to build this school and the following schools, we've gotten very much into the greening of facilities: recycled products throughout, doing that as much as we can, a lot of skylights, a lot of open-use facilities.

[01:09:45]

All of these schools in the north were scheduled to open as multitrack year-round because of anticipated growth. At the Natomas Park Elementary site, there was a big sign the whole time from when we were even just talking about building it: "This is going to be a year-round school." We knew we were growing so fast we were going to have to open campuses as year-round schools. The sign was up for the year and three months we were building it, and still we had people come in when we opened and say, "I had no idea this was going to be a year-round school."

Because we knew these were going to be year-round schools, all the campuses were built so that the classrooms from a grade level all circulate. They have a door into a common area in the middle of a pod of classrooms, which is the teacher area and supply area, since teachers would be moving in and out of classrooms through the course of the year. It is a pod approach and there's plenty of storage when teachers are off-track.

This, too, is built on the edge of a community park, a large-sized park with some beautiful sculpture in it. A beautiful sculpture of some wide, bright eyes, a big metallic structure, was built by Larry Meeks who had been a trustee of the Natomas School District before he got involved in community art. He built that

for the project. This, too, plays out on a park, a bike trail — this is very community accessible. Again, it is the first real community center, community facility, in North Natomas. The cafeteria gymnasium was very well-used: choral groups sang here, churches were here, the Catholic Church moved its activities up here. Divine Mercy got to the point where they were operating three masses a weekend out of this gymnasium before building their own facility, which is just down the road now. Again, all of these gymnasiums in the school district have tremendous community use, quite often for religious services on weekends.

Most of our schools are the traditional California Ranch-style school: It's very open and single story, which you expect here, which is not as common on the East Coast with their snow and so forth. Natomas Park is the first of this floorplan. The one high point in it is the library, which is a two-story library, which has a lot of sun coming in. It is built to look sort of like a well tower on this campus. This campus plan was reused on two other sites.

When we first opened this campus, the design of the library proved a problem, not because of the sunlight, but because you could hear everything. Even people speaking in a whisper in one corner could be heard in another corner, so the acoustics were very interesting. We had to do a lot of work to improve the acoustics, and that paid off in the other campuses that we learned about that early.

[01:13:06]

Heron School, Natomas Park Elementary School, Witter Ranch Elementary School

We're now at Heron School, which was kind of being built at the same time as Witter Ranch School. Heron School, named for the herons or egrets that are so famous around this area, particularly out standing in the rice fields that all of this area of North Natomas used to be. Witter Ranch, named after the Witter family of the stockbrokerage fame. They lived on a ranch over there. So, you're starting to see names that are very community oriented.

Heron School was originally supposed to be an elementary school, a K-5 school. It was getting ready to open, and as it got ready to open, we decided we wanted it to be a K-8 school. There was a lot of demand for K-8. So, while it was being finished, we also got very active building a gymnasium in the back to accommodate a K-8, and planning a K-8 curriculum to make this all possible. It was a challenge merging in because the state does funny things with money for an elementary school versus a middle school, applying different rules and different requirements. There were a lot of policy changes that had to be created as part of it, but it has been a successful experiment. As I mentioned, we want to replicate a K-8 at Bannon Creek in the south area. It is a site where students come for kindergarten and go all the way through eighth grade, getting their middle school experience in a smaller environment. As we drove up today, there is a sign saying "Prom," something you don't usually see at an elementary school.

This school has quite an effective youth festival that they do every year. Again, built on a quad campus, you have the tall library just like Natomas Park. You'll see much more use of green materials here. Adjacent to a park, we're built adjacent to a bikeway, so it really encourages students to walk to school or take their bike to school.

Oh, I forgot my favorite story from Natomas Park, so I'm backing up with that. Natomas Park, we started to build that, and in the really old days back when we had American Lakes Schools and we were worried about the levees, the original plan at the old Natomas School was that if the levees broke, you would move the kids to the roof and then figure out how to get them out of the area later. That was the old plan. So, when we were doing the early walkthroughs at Natomas Park, I was talking to the architects

and said, “How many kids will the roofs hold?” He looked at me and said, “What do you mean?” I said, “I see the ladders going up to the roof” — because they hadn’t been enclosed yet — “That’s the emergency plan, so how many kids will the roof hold?” He stopped in his tracks, looked at me just scared to death, and said, “These aren’t designed to hold kids on the roofs!” So, my sense of humor shook him up a little bit. I knew we had long since come up with a more comprehensive and effective plan on how we move those kids in a flood emergency.

[01:17:02]

We talked before about Bannon School being a GATE school. Once North Natomas started filling out, Natomas Park became the first school that had GATE in the north area.

Now there is also GATE at Witter Ranch Elementary. Witter Ranch uses this same design as the initial part of Heron School. It is kind of back in the back, in a more residential area. When we opened Witter Ranch, we held it closed for a year because we didn’t need it quite yet because growth had slowed a bit. We held it closed for a year, maintained the property so it stayed nice, and allowed some use of the gymnasium and the sports field so there were people around being active to see it. Then when we opened it, Witter Ranch was opened as two schools: both Witter Ranch and American Lakes. That was the year we closed American Lakes down, tore it to the ground, and remodeled it, so American Lakes was over there for a full year while we did that. Amazingly, we got that school back together in just one year. They were very clear that they wanted to have two schools. The parent group would stay together; they wouldn’t lose the PTA and any of those interests and so forth. So, there were actually two schools operating there together under the same principal, Julia True. We had buses at American Lakes for them. You would go to American Lakes, get on, and take your ride up to North Natomas to Witter Ranch.

Witter Ranch library is designed very much to look like one of the old pump houses, water towers that you saw at the old farmhouses over in that area. It was the first school in the north west of I-5, and on the cutting edge of construction activity at the time, and was kind of out in the field.

One thing about Natomas High School, it’s on the boundary of the school district. Even if you’re a student looking over the fence toward the stadium doesn’t automatically mean you get to come to our high school. So, we tried to move schools off the boundary lines more in the North Natomas area and bring them more into more centrally located areas.

Heron, Witter, all of these are still adjacent to parks — we continue to keep up that community park sense that there is open space around all the schools. We continue to use them as community facilities, even as other public facilities start to grow by now in North Natomas. The South Natomas Community Center and Library is picking up a little more of that now in the south area, but by the time these schools are operating, you still do not have much in the way of community facilities up in the north.

Bannon Creek is another one of the schools where they have a very aggressive Walk-To-School program. It is also centrally located in a residential area that’s very popular. Heron will also have access to the North Natomas Regional Park when the city builds that out. It is a block away — it is between here and Inderkum High School, which I’ll talk to you more about later. It will be a really good opportunity for the students to use that at build out.

[01:21:04]

Inderkum High School

So now we're at the new flagship campus for the school district, Inderkum High School. Inderkum High School is part of a community facility, a grand public use, and public partnership venture. It had five public agency partners in putting this together, very much driven by Superintendent Dave Tooker. All the partners will tell you it is very much thanks to Dave's energy and efforts that they stayed together and stayed on track for this. Very much in recognition, the football field is named Dave Tooker Field, recognizing all his efforts here. But in putting this project together, it is a project with the City of Sacramento, the city parks district — we're adjacent to the master regional park in this area — American River College, which has a campus built out in the front, Sacramento State University, which has some investment in this to be able to use both the college facilities and the high school facilities, and the Sacramento Public Library, which has a library on site.

We talked about the other facilities being pretty much single-level, broad, sprawling campuses. This campus is a two-story campus. A community group traveled to Washington State to see how this design could work, since it isn't typical in California. We knew we'd have to convince folks with something different. It was designed that way to decrease the footprint of the school. We had only so much land here to use, so everything went up a little bit. It is also designed to be much more secure a building. You can keep high school students inside this so they're not doing as much interaction with the public who would be using the park facility, people using the library facility, or people using the college facilities. It is designed on the concept of an Arden Fair Mall. It has a big, wide expanse in the center space with balconies that look over the sides so there is a huge public space, but it is inside the campus rather than out. It was always designed so the students in the school would use the public library as their library, too.

Initially, before those other institutions were built, the Sacramento Public Library was housed in rooms inside the high school. They now have their own building on the west side of campus. Also, inside the high school was the Natomas Historical Society at that time, and American River College used the school at night for night classes. Since that time, they have built a building on the south side of campus.

All the buildings are designed to architecturally complement one another. The community library has also built its building on the west side of the campus. Students from this campus were always intended to be able to go and take college credit classes, if they were ready for them, at the community college and everything complements another.

About the time this facility was being built, we also built a full-service kitchen at our district office site. So, this campus doesn't have the same level of kitchen facility that Natomas High would have, but it does have a major cafeteria complex that allows for multiple types of food to be served in different lines, very much on the idea like a food court at the mall. It also has a full-stage theater production facility, music rooms, and an outdoor art space between here and the community college campus — it has an art courtyard. Again, it has a major athletic facility, a track, grandstands, bleachers, and all those things have the synthetic fields as well. It does not have a swimming pool; we went with the larger pool out at Natomas High so we would have one pool for the district.

Interesting thing about this facility, now we're starting to get really green. Underneath the parking lot here is a geothermal bed and the campus is powered by geothermal energy — heated, cooled. One of the walls inside the facility is essentially plexiglassed over so you could use it as a teaching opportunity to teach the science of geothermal. It works on that basis, so we are maximizing what we can do. You'll

notice the trees are still quite small. When they are grown up a bit more, you'll see much more of the use of natural energy. We are talking about covering part of this parking area with solar shields, which will also bring us additional energy through solar, and cover cars a little bit during the day.

[01:27:24]

The initial principal, Ron Zimbalist, had been the principal at Natomas Middle School, which is what we now call the original facility out on Del Paso Road. He moved over here with an intention to start an International Baccalaureate program here much like our students had while at Mira Loma High School. While the program unfortunately didn't take off then, we are trying to start it again for the 2012-13 year.

We did start with a hands-on ROP program, a dependent charter school program that did construction. That didn't stay together particularly long, but that started here in one wing of the building. Also starting here was the initial Natomas Pacific Pathways Prep, the NP3 program. Starting out at the original site on Del Paso Road, Natomas Charter School moved to the Leroy F. Greene site while that was starting out, then back to the old Natomas Del Paso Road site before getting their own campus on the far end of Del Paso Road to the east, out at Blackrock Road. Parts of the charter school program were also operated in a couple of strip mall facilities around Natomas, one out on West El Camino and one on Northgate.

Going back to this campus, Inderkum High School is again a historic name suggested by the naming committee. It is named after a family, not just one person. The Inderkum Dairies had been a prominent piece of early Natomas development. They had produced the first pasteurized milk for all the school districts in the Sacramento and Yolo County areas for a long time. Members of the Inderkum family had been on the school district boards of the Natomas School District for many, many years, several generations. It was determined to honor their contributions both to the school district and the community in general, not naming any one of those individuals in particular, but just calling it the Inderkum High School. Several generations of the Inderkum family were available when the school was dedicated in a particular naming ceremony for them and they attended the first graduation. Members of the family try to attend every graduation ceremony and often sit on the stage with us for the program.

This facility, too, hosts many, many community events. Recently, a farmer's market was started in the parking lot. Several marches and runs start here. The community theater is used by many groups, including one of the larger community churches. This facility is intended to be a multiuse community facility. Part of the idea behind the joint-use project was to reuse and multiuse all of the activities out here.

One of the planned buildings that is not yet built is a multistory parking garage over towards the southeast corner of the facility. That would serve the community college, the high school, and the regional park.

The regional park was supposed to have other facilities that the school could use: a running track, possibly a pool, possibly tennis courts, and all of those kinds of things. So, the idea would be that all these different groups of people would not have to build their own facility and have more than one, but everybody would use all the shared stuff. There is also a site designed in here with an easement such that should light rail eventually come up this way, there is a light rail stop property, if you will, designed with nothing on it to be torn down, so that could stop right out in front of this campus.

[1:32:00]

Natomas Charter School

These last several schools, Inderkum High School, H. Allen Hight, and parts of Natomas Charter School out on Blackrock, are all the product of Measure D, a facilities bond the community passed. Once the charter school moved out of the existing school facilities, they moved to their own facility out on Blackrock. By that time, the charter schools had expanded to three programs: its home school program, its technology program, and a performing and fine arts program. They did some major fundraising to help raise money to build a very high-end theater project there. The south end of the theater, that is now the Benvenuti Theater, is five stories high and it is intended to have flying sets. You don't see flying sets at typical high school theaters. This is designed to really teach kids not only the arts end of performing arts, but all of the technical ends as well: the high-end work of sound systems, lighting systems, and flying sets. So, it is an incredible cultural facility that community arts groups use as well in an additional benefit to the Natomas community. Otherwise, they would have to go to Davis or into Sacramento to see, so it has been a real asset to the community. That facility was built out there partly with charter school funds and partly with Measure D funds. The way the law works, we own those facilities that were built with school district funds and the charter school uses the theater as one of those projects. The facility was named for Richard Benvenuti, a local developer, as part of a fundraising effort selling naming rights to the buildings. It was purchased for him as a gift by a good friend.

[01:34:20]

H. Allen Hight Elementary School

Concurrent with that being built, we also started to build the facility called H. Allen Hight. Allen Hight was a kindergarten teacher back at American Lakes School, and moved to some others, and was absolutely beloved. He loved science and was active in improving our science standards, doing professional development with our teachers regarding science. He died at a young age and was a huge loss. He had been such a mentor to our early teaching faculty that we really wanted to honor him in this way, so that's why the school was named after him.

This school is another one of our really greening efforts. Board member Ron Dwyer pushed hard to put a green roof on this school. It could be the first school in the state of California with a roof covered with living plant material. What we decided to do is do a turf roof only on the administration portion of the building, so we could try it out, see if it would work. If we could get it through all the planning and construction stages, and then if it didn't work, it would only be raining on the adults and not on the kids. So that's why it is only on the administration portion of the building.

The building is split into two sides. It was always intended to be an elementary school and a middle school — two separate campuses sharing a joint library and administration building, again the idea of shared facilities. The elementary side is two stories because, by state law, you cannot ask elementary school-aged kids in a fire to go down more than one set of stairs. The middle school is built to three stories because apparently those kids are better able to get themselves out of a fire. So, that's why if you're wondering why the campus doesn't look balanced in height, that is the reason. There is a shared gymnasium in the building and shared lunch facilities, and so forth, so they can overlap. Big fields for soccer and other activities, and a park facility that is adjacent to this as well.

One of the important things to note about this facility is that it has tilt-up walls. They are concrete and poured on site. We are told it was the largest single construction for a concrete pour in the state of California, ever! So, it was a massive project done on time and under budget, a tremendous architectural project.

This facility is hugely green, meets all the LEED standards — everything recycled, lots of natural lighting, lighting that raises and lowers itself depending on the outside light coming in. Tremendously set in this way. I'm looking at the shade structures over the eating area here. Shade structures were also a part of the Measure D bond. Shade structures were put in not only on these new projects, but shade structures were constructed at the old schools as well as part of Measure D, so they were also getting benefit from that bond.

Mr. Hervey Taylor was the first principal at the elementary side of the school, H. Allen Hight Elementary.

The middle school was unused at first, then we moved in the folks that were at Natomas Middle on Del Paso Road this last year. Carla Najara-Coonsmiller had been the principal out there — moved over here with those students and then the children from Leroy Greene also moved over here under her principalship last year.

When the middle school moved to Hight from the site at the west end of Del Paso, the Natomas School became a joint-use facility for West Lake Charter and NP3 Charter. Both moved to that facility at that time.

At H. Allen Hight, all the exterior walks between buildings on the second level were initially intended to be open area walks, but for student safety they are more enclosed. You cannot push anybody off a walkway or over the railing. Those temptations are gone. The district, also anticipating Natomas build-out, purchased at least three other properties that are vacant properties for additional buildings. We are thinking about a site that would be another charter school campus where we would put our charter schools as we grow.

[1:39:37]

Future schools, charter schools, home schooling, online courses

North Natomas was designed that all the housing areas would be within walking distance of a school. So, schools sites have been set aside. We were able to purchase those as developers started building and as we are able to get deals to do that. Across from the original Natomas School, which is now the Natomas Del Paso Road site, the district has purchased property. Across the street next to the West Lakeside homes, we own property currently under consideration for a third smaller high school that has environmental education focus. It would utilize the natural habitat area that we're required to preserve there protecting the giant garter snake, the Swainson's hawk, and various and sundry other native plants and animals, designing it into the curriculum at a high school site for careers in those areas.

I mentioned the Natomas Charter Schools; there are three active charters in the district now. I mentioned one that closed that had originally opened in Inderkum High School. Charter schools are public charter schools that are their own entities but work closely with our district. They can contract for some services from our district, food services, accounting services, and so forth. As well as allowing them to utilize facilities that we don't need, we can talk about building facilities that they might use. Natomas Charter School started out as a middle-school high-technology program. They added a homeschool parent support program, and finally a performing and fine arts program, all which are now operating out of the Blackrock site. They are just now in the early stages of beginning a pre-kindergarten program that will operate in a rented site.

Natomas also does some independent study home schooling through the district; that operates out of the various school sites. The teacher is housed there or goes to the student at home depending on their particular needs.

We also do a number of online courses, particularly at the high-school levels, for courses where we simply don't have enough student demand to justify a full-time teacher. This blended online program allows for greater course diversity for students at both the high and low end of the program. So, for either credit recovery or advanced course work, students are able to take courses online at school and be connected with teachers who are teaching them — perhaps fifth-year French or some credit recovery course that they need to get caught up on.

[1:42:55]

Language programs, diversity

I do say for fifth-year French, when we started Natomas High, I pushed very hard for Principal Jackson to start with eastern languages, Mandarin and Japanese. We've had a very difficult time finding teachers to teach those courses as well as a sufficient number of students to justify those courses, but there still is interest in having courses in those areas as we recognize our role in the Pacific Rim economy.

The Westlake Charter School — an elementary school started by parents in the West Lakeside and Westlake communities who were interested in having a charter school where students would start learning a second language at kindergarten. That program currently starts at the kindergarten level teaching Spanish. As it grows, they hope to expand to different languages, but those students take Spanish at every grade level. Currently, our community in Natomas is the most diverse school district in California and second most in the country. We're 25-25-25-25 — We're 25% white, 25% black, 25% Latino, and 25% Asian. Asian, of course, spreads across East Asian, West Asian, and South Asian, quite a variety. Our principal second language, as in most school districts in California, is Spanish. Our second most populous home-spoken language is Punjab, which also makes us unique in the Sacramento area.

Once H. Allen Hight was built, that was where we've moved the Natomas Historical Society as we continue to recognize the importance of our local history. They've moved from Inderkum over here. The library has also moved out of Inderkum High into its own facility adjacent to Inderkum. Inderkum has also been a program incubator site in its own way.